

THE

# COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. IX.

BOSTON, NOVEMBER 1, 1847.

No. 21.

LOCKE AMSDEN; OR, THE SCHOOLMASTER:

A TALE.

VERILY, here is a new thing under the sun, and Solomon must have spoken of his own time, and not of ours. Here is a regular-built novel, — love story and all, — the hero of which is a country COMMON SCHOOL MASTER. The scene is professedly laid in the “northern portion of the Union,” but all the attendant circumstances limit it to the meridian of New England. The main action of the piece is the keeping of two country, district winter schools; but the incidents connected with these furnish the occasions for setting forth all the mischiefs of bad schools, and all the blessings of good ones. In regard to those external requisites, whose presence is essential and whose absence is fatal to the welfare of a school, the author happily contrasts the opposite effects of apathy and of interest; and he sets forth the legitimate consequences of having on the school committee, instead of sensible and learned men, a set of pretenders, and such as have not literature enough in their sconces to elevate them into quacks. The representation is glaring, though not exaggerated; for on this point exaggeration is impossible. In what belongs to the internal condition of a school, the evils of a badly constructed house, of a location environed by annoyances, of torturing seats, of a want of ventilation, &c. &c., are graphically portrayed, and the power of a competent teacher to remedy all these defects is exemplified. The means, as well as the grand object of intellectual education, are truly described; and by an exceedingly well managed incident, the author lets us into his views respecting the administration of punishment. On this much vexed question, we think, all sound men will pronounce him sound. By the force of one well-timed punishment a school is subdued, which for years had turned the master out of doors; and which, during the preceding winter, had tied the teacher to a plank, borne him three times round the schoolhouse, and then formally dismissed him.

One feature, in the administration of the punishment described, we think peculiarly felicitous, and that is the presence of the parent. An instance once came within our knowledge of a school, not in a remote country district, but in one of the seats of government in our Union, from which many masters had been forcibly ejected by a set of rebellious boys, the last instance of the kind being the most flagrant of all. The teacher's head was thrust by force into the stove, his eyebrows and eyelashes singed off, his eyesight ruined for life, and his health essentially injured by the violence inflicted. No possible deficiency on the part of a teacher could palliate such an outrage, and yet the perpetrators went unwhipped of parental and public justice. A gentleman of fine classical attainments, and superior moral qualifications, but of slight health and delicate proportions, knowing all the circumstances that had occurred in the school, had the resolution to go into it soon after, determining to subdue it by gentle means if possible, but by force if necessary, and even to suffer prosecution by law at the hands of the parents, — which was a mode of revenge they had before practised upon resolute teachers of the school. He soon found it necessary to assert his authority, and, as he could not ascertain the culprits who set at naught his commands, he began at one end of the school, and whipped every boy in course until all surrendered. The parents prosecuted; — he paid the fines, and, nothing daunted, went back into school. He found it subdued, and from that time treated the pupils like men and women, — as "Bunker," an illiterate but sensible and important personage in our story, expresses it, — and had no further difficulty. The very parents who had prosecuted, soon apologized, and he had an uninterrupted and successful school for many years. In that instance we cannot undertake to say what course was wisest, but we prefer Locke Amsden's device when possible. If parent and teacher coöperate, and no offensive airs of authority be put on, the discipline of a school is in little danger. Bunker's advice, by the way, "Treat them like men and women," contains a vast deal of wisdom. Children know when they are treated justly, and respond to generous appeals to their manliness and honor; and if a teacher is actuated by the proper sentiments, and will always improve the opportunity to establish an elevated mutual relation between himself and his scholars at the commencement of his school, half the difficulties of discipline will vanish. But, to do this, a teacher must have real superiority of attainment and character. He must be able to make his superiority felt, and be in danger of no such embarrassments as Locke, when a school-boy, caused to the teacher of his own school and those of all the schools in the neighborhood; for our hero, when a pupil, was an importunate inquirer into the reasons of things; he demanded the *pros* and *cons*, the *whys* and *wherefores*, on all sub-

jects; and, finding that his own teacher radiated nothing but palpable darkness, he worried all the teachers in the vicinity, until they were glad to flee from the place. Teachers afterwards avoided the town where he lived, as foxes are said to shun a place where one of their kith and kin has been trapped.

This illustration of Common School principles and Common School truths, through the medium of fiction, we say is new, and it is as grateful as it is novel. For the first time, this neglected and oftentimes despised theme is brought within the domain of Popular Literature. It is ornamented by the skill of an easy writer, and dignified by the reflections of a sound thinker. The schoolmaster is introduced for the purpose of being honored, and not ridiculed; and yet neither Scott, nor Irving, nor Dickens, who have so often portrayed the incompetent, but never even recognized the possibility of the competent Common School master, — neither, we say, has ever written any thing which reflects such deserved odium upon incompetency as this book. It debases the low by exalting the excellent; it shows, in the most truthful manner, how the blessings of a good district school will, in the course of a few years, entirely renovate the character of a neighborhood.

Unlike almost all other novels, there are no very extraordinary circumstances belonging to the early history of the principal actors, and the happy results are made to depend upon moral energy and fidelity, instead of springing up by chance, or coming supernaturally. A boy possessing high endowments of mind and heart, — but born in obscurity, circumscribed by penury; having a father who possessed no capacity to appreciate his powers, or to sympathize with his desires; himself almost unconscious whither his secret longings tended, yet impelled upward as by the uncoiling of a mighty spring in his bosom, which no adverse weight could repress, — works his way onward from one stage to another, and, with no more of good fortune than happens to any New England boy, prepares himself at last to keep a school. One deficiency, however, which our hero suffered in common with ninety-nine out of every hundred of all teachers, as they were six years ago, and as forty-nine fiftieths of them are now, came near proving his ruin. The schoolhouse in which he labored was tight as a bottle, and the shutting of the door was like the putting in of a cork. In addition to this, it was warmed by a stove. During the early part of the winter, however, the weather being unusually mild, the door had been left open sufficiently to allow a renewal of the air. But, after a few weeks, the character of the weather suddenly changed. Intense cold succeeded. The schoolroom was shut up, the stove plied, and the rations of air were reduced to the death point. If our friend Bunker had been in the habit of remaining long enough in the schoolroom at any one time, probably his own headache would have suggested the cause of the

evil to his thinking mind ; for, amidst his other gleanings by the wayside of knowledge, he could not have failed to learn that fresh air is essential to life. But the teacher had excited an intense interest in the study of arithmetic, — number and quantity being his own original hobby, — and the children's brains would not bear poisoned air and hard study at the same time. The brightest scholars fell ill ; while ill they were delirious, and while delirious they ciphered. A third part of the district was very religious ; they were as ignorant as they were religious, and, of course, as superstitious as they were ignorant. They could not account for the changed habits of the school. They could not see why children who had been disorderly, riotous, and rebellious, — who had for years made the master the object of abuse and violence, — should suddenly become quiet, respectful, devoted to study, and in love with the teacher and with school. They were too ignorant to know, — they had never had the experience themselves, when children, that nothing is so attractive to the youthful mind as knowledge, when intelligibly presented, no spell over them equal to that of the magician who can show them the reason, and give them a glimpse into the nature of things. As the passion for ciphering accompanied the epidemic, some one about as far ahead of his neighbors as Cotton Mather was of his contemporaries, solved the whole mystery at once by attributing it to the *Black Art*. The devil must be at the bottom of the change, and the schoolmaster must be his professor. A district meeting was suddenly called. Deacon Gilchrist was put into the chair. A member of the cabal moved, that "this school do now come to an eend." Deacon Gilchrist cited the authority of "*Woollen Mather*," and the whole trouble was about to be settled at short hand, when an objection was interposed by an heretical unbeliever in witchcraft, a discussion ensued, Bunker arrived from a distant journey, and, after the lapse of about an hour during which the debate lasted, an intelligent physician from another town by mere chance happening to be present, discovered the whole cause of the prevailing sickness, by his own feelings combined with his knowledge, explained it on natural grounds instead of referring it to diabolical interference, made use of the freshly-generated headaches and stupor of the audience to convince them, and ended by having a hole cut through the ceiling on the spot, by which their blood was vivified and their minds enlightened at the same time. The school proceeded and closed with uninterrupted and signal prosperity.

The other school kept by Locke Amsden was a trial to his feelings and purposes, but from different causes. It was in a more prosperous region, where some of the inhabitants who had grown rich, but were not enlightened by their riches, had established a private school for gentility's sake, and thus at once degraded the district schools into vulgar ones. The



same intelligent physician had been appointed sole committee man, and had determined to raise the character of the school by the selection of a superior teacher. From the very depths of apathy, Locke Amsden raised the district school to a high standard; the school flourishes; the whole village becomes electrified by its success; and all this without any extraordinary appliances, but only by an animated and judicious course of instruction and management. Worldly fortune grows out of acknowledged merit, and persevering effort at length enables Locke Amsden to apply liberal means to the furtherance of the good cause, in the shape of handsome salaries to accomplished teachers. The example is contagious; the character of all the schools in the neighborhood is elevated, and the whole tone of society is changed.

In this last school, the love-spell is cast, into whose charmed circle we shall not enter. We accept the author's description of the "tender passion" for the sake of the wisdom pervading the rest of his pages. May others peruse his wisdom, if for no better reason, at least for the love story.

After one further remark, we shall close by extracting a passage which describes the "examination" of Locke Amsden and a competitor, before the august tribunal of a school committee who decide all things independently of their merits.

We know not who is the author of this talented and well-written book; but, in the exercise of our birthright, we *guess* he is a New Englander; and we further *guess* he is not a Massachusetts man. We make this last inference from the fact that his philosophy about schoolhouses, though once very good, is now behind the age in this meridian. It seems almost invidious to refer to a few faults of style; and had the author left out that abominable word "*illy*," we would not have done so. He might as well say "*welly*" as "*illy*."

"The managing committee, consisting of the merchant of the place, the tailor, and the newspaper editor, (for a political newspaper, called *The Blazing Star*, had just been established in this miniature city,) 'were now on the look-out to engage a man of those splendidest qualifications which the growing importance of the place demanded.' Though somewhat startled at this pompous announcement, our candidate yet took directions to the house of the merchant, who, it was said, would probably exercise a rather controlling influence among this able board of managers. A few steps brought him to the showy white house before named, as belonging to the popular personage, — as an only merchant of a little village generally is, — of whom he was in quest. On applying the knocker, the door was opened by the merchant himself, who appeared with a pen behind his ear, and invited the other into his sitting-room, where it appeared he had been posting his books. He was a youngerly (?) man, of an affectedly brisk and courteous manner. Supposing his visiter had called for the purposes of trade, he received him with all the smirks and bows of a practised salesman, and began to talk rapidly about nothing, — i. e., the state of the weath-

er, and the condition of the roads for travelling. As soon, however, as Locke announced his name and business, he suddenly became much less profuse of his bows and smiles, and, assuming a consequential air, observed, —

“ ‘Why, sir, we are not over-anxious to engage a teacher just now, — though, to be sure, we have so many applications pressing upon us, that we shall be compelled to decide soon. But you see, sir, we have a flourishing village here. It is thought we shall have an academy soon. There are many public-spirited and genteel people in the place; and they will not be suited with any thing short of a teacher of the most superfine qualifications.’

“ ‘I trust to be able to answer all reasonable expectations, in that respect,’ remarked Amsden, scarcely able to repress a smile at the other’s singular application of terms.

“ ‘Presume it, — presume it, — that is, can’t say to the contrary. But do you bring any letters of credit with you?’

“ ‘Credentials? I have something of the kind about me, I believe; but having seen how easily they are obtained, and how little reliance the public place upon them, I thought not of offering them, preferring to be examined, and not doubting that your committee would be abundantly able to satisfy yourselves of my qualifications by such a course much better than by a dependence on the certificates of others.’

“ ‘That’s fair, that’s fair, sir. Why, to be sure, I profess to know something myself about education, having been to an academy a quarter before entering business, and the gentlemen who are committee with me, one the editor of the *Blazing Star*, and the other the merchant tailor of our village, are both men of some parts, — especially our editor, whom I consider to be a man of splendid talents. I will send for them, sir.’

“ So saying, the merchant committee man went out and despatched a boy for his colleagues, who soon made their appearance, and were thereupon introduced, in due form, to our candidate for the throne of a village school. The new-comers also were both men below the middle age. He of the goose, (we mean no disrespect to that honest calling, who take all the jokes and get all the money,) was a man of a fair, feminine appearance, of pert, janty manners, and of showy dress, done in the very extremes of last year’s city fashions, though recently made, and now worn as a sort of sign-board sample to display constantly before the great public of Mill Town Emporium and its tributaries, convincing proof of his signal ability to make good the glowing professions of his standing advertisement in the *Blazing Star*, ‘to be always prepared to cut and make to order after the very latest New York and London fashions.’ The editor was a personage of quite a different appearance. He was grave and severe of look, his countenance plainly indicating how deeply he was conscious of the important responsibilities of his position, as conductor of the *Blazing Star*, on which the political destinies of the country so much depended.

“ The sage trio, who were to decide on our hero’s qualifications in the sciences, being thus brought together, the merchant announced to his colleagues the cause of the convocation, and the progress already made in the business on hand.

“ ‘Do you teach after the latest style and fashion of teaching, sir?’ commenced the tailor; ‘there must be much in that, I think. There is nothing like keeping up with the improvements and latest style of

the times, if one calculates to succeed, in almost any thing, at this day.'

" 'As far as I could see changes to be improvements, I certainly should follow them,' replied Locke.

" 'Do you teach book-keeping?' asked the merchant; 'I consider that to be of the last importance.'

" 'Literally, so do I, sir. An understanding, and mechanical skill of execution, of the principles of penmanship, I consider of the first importance; and, these attained, it may be lastly important that the pupil be instructed in book-keeping,' answered Locke, without observing the air of pique which became visible in the countenance of the interrogator at this answer.

" 'I feel impelled by my sense of duty to my country,' said the editor, 'to make a preliminary question. And I trust the gentleman will excuse my desire to know which of the two great political parties of the day he supports. This I would not consider a *sine qua non*, or even very important, at some periods in our public affairs; but when, as now, I see an obnoxious party power stalking through the land, like the besom of destruction, to overthrow the sacred liberties of the country, I do hold it an imperious duty to know the principles of those we encourage; not because I should fear that one of that party, whose further increase I so much deprecate, could exercise a pernicious influence in our intelligent village, where, since the establishment of the *Blazing Star*, the political views of the people, I am proud to say, are so generally correct,—no, not at all on that account, but for the inherent principle of the thing.'

" 'I have never,' replied Locke, utterly surprised that a test-question of this kind should be put to him,— "I have never, till within the present year, been qualified by age for a voter. I have examined the leading principles of our government, it is true, and I much admire them; but, supposing that the opposing parties of the day were all mainly agreed in their aims to sustain those principles, and were, after all, only disputing about men, or, at the worst, the different means of gaining the same end, I have so little interested myself in party questions, that I have as yet formed no decided preferences for either side.'

" 'You are mistaken, sir,' rejoined the editor. 'If you suppose that both parties are for sustaining the same principles, you are most'—

"The speaker was here interrupted by a smart rap of the knocker without. The merchant sprang to the door, and soon ushered into the room a personage alike unexpected and unknown to all present. His appearance at once showed him to be a person of many airs, with no lack of confidence in himself. He carried a tasselled cane, and wore a showy safety-chain, with an abundance of watch seals, to say the least, dangling from his pocket, while his dress was what has significantly been termed the shabby genteel. After inquiring if the gentlemen present were the school committee, he announced his business, which, to the surprise, and, it must be confessed, somewhat to the uneasiness, of our hero, proved to be the same that had prompted his own call. The committee, however, seemed very far from looking upon the visit of the stranger as an intrusion; and, apprizing him that they had just commenced the examination of one candidate, they told him 'the more the merrier,' as it would afford them a better chance for selection, and invited him to make number two; which being assented to, they proceeded with the examination.

“‘What are your views, Mr. Blake, — for that, I think, you told me was your name,’ — said the editor, whose mind was still running on the subject on which he was about to be eloquent, when interrupted by the entrance of the new candidate, — ‘What are your views of the propriety of instilling correct political principles into the minds of your pupils, who are the rising generation, and soon to wield the destinies of our glorious republic?’

“‘I hold, sir,’ replied Blake, — who, it appeared, had cunningly inquired out the calling, politics, &c., of each of the committee, before coming near them, — ‘I do hold, though others may disagree with me, that it is rather important to attend to the particular you have instigated, sir. I’m always open in my politics. I read several articles in a newspaper over at the tavern, just now, while waiting for my dinner, that speaks my sentiments on that head exactly.’

“‘What paper was it?’ eagerly asked the editor.

“‘I didn’t mind particularly,’ replied the other with affected carelessness; ‘but I think it was the Star, or some such title.’

“‘The Blazing Star?’ said the former, with a complaisant bow.

“‘The same,’ rejoined Blake, — ‘the very same; I now recall it.’

“‘That is the paper, sir, which I have the honor of conducting,’ said the other, with another bow and a gracious smile.

“‘Indeed! Why, sir,’ said Blake, with pretended embarrassment, — ‘why, sir, had I supposed, — but I was so struck with the able, — I hope you will pardon me, sir, for introducing’ —

“‘O, certainly, certainly, sir,’ interrupted the editor. ‘I feel myself both flattered and gratified by your opinions. There, gentlemen,’ he continued, turning with a triumphant air to his two associates, ‘I have done what I considered my duty with the candidates, on the point in which I feel a deep interest. I am now willing to turn them over to you, for examination in the sciences.’

“‘I should like to hear what Mr. Blake thinks about teaching book-keeping in a school, since I have the misfortune to disagree with the other gentleman here,’ said the merchant.

“‘Book-keeping?’ said Blake, instantly catching a hint from the last part of the other’s observation. ‘O, book-keeping is quite essential, — quite, sir, quite; I always learn it to my pupils.’

“‘I think so; I think it’s an important item in the account,’ responded the merchant, glancing round at his colleagues, significantly, as he threw himself back with a self-satisfied air.

“‘I have a boy,’ said the tailor, ‘whom is pretty cute in grammar, as all allow; and I would be pleased to hear the gentlemen explain on that department, and tell whether their mode and manner of teaching it is of the latest style.’

“Mr. Blake here being not so prompt as usual in taking the lead, Amsden briefly, but clearly, explained the first principles of English grammar, the object and uses of that branch, and his manner of teaching it by the text books of Murray and others. The other candidate, after waiting till pressed to give his views in so pointed a manner that he saw no way to avoid saying something on the subject, with some hesitation, observed, —

“‘Well, gentlemen, my notions about grammar may be different from others’, perhaps yours. Now, my sentiments is something like this: — the true use of grammar is to learn ’em sense. Well, in what the gentleman here calls parsing syntax, I, now, should make my



scholars find out the sense of a piece. And if they can do that, it is all I should require; because the only use of grammar being to learn 'em the sense, as I said, why, the work is done, an't it? I take it so, gentlemen. But suppose they can't do this, — then I should take the piece in hand myself; and if I could not make sense out of it, then I should call it false grammar, that's all. So when I have my scholars write compositions, I square the grammar of their pieces upon the sense they contain; for where there's sense, there must, in course, be grammar; and visy versy. Now, that's my system, gentlemen. For I have no notion of spoiling sense to make it fay in with book rules; but I make the grammar come down to the sense, not the sense give up to the grammar.'

"'Just my sentiments, to a shaving!' exclaimed the merchant. 'I used to study grammar when at the academy, and bothered and bothered to parse by the rules; but I never could see the use of it. And now, in my business letters, I never think of trying to write by any of the rules I learnt; and yet I write grammar, because I write sense, as he says. Yes, them's my sentiments about grammar.'

"'Well, it does look kinder reasonable,' said the tailor, 'though my boy learnt the rules, syntax, and catemology, and all; and I don't know what he would say to leaving 'em off. But perhaps this way of teaching grammar the gentleman speaks of is some new imported fashion, that's soon to be all the style?' he added, inquiringly looking at the patent grammarian who had just before spoken.

"'Precisely,' answered the other, with a conciliating nod; 'it is indeed, sir, a new system, of the very latest cut.'

"'I am satisfied, then, sir,' rejoined the other.

"'Which is the most useful rule in arithmetic, Mr. Amsden?' asked the merchant. 'I profess to know something about that myself.'

"'Why, that would be nearly as difficult to tell, I imagine, as regards all the fundamental rules, as it would be to point out the most useful wheel of a watch, in which all the wheels are required to keep the whole in motion,' replied Locke.

"'Now, I don't think so,' said the questioner; 'but I'll ask Mr. Blake.'

"'O, I say the rule that helps a man most to do business by, and you know quite well what that is, I fancy; for you tell what the articles you sell come to by that,' observed Blake, obsequiously bowing to the merchant.

"'Ay, I see you are a practical man, Mr. Blake,' here chimed in the editor; 'and such men are the very nerves and sinews of our republic.'

"'I care less about that,' rejoined the merchant; 'but I must say I approve the gentleman's views of grammar and arithmetic. But suppose we now pass on to geography.'

"'How do you bound the Polar Sea, Mr. Amsden?'

"'Which Polar Sea?' asked Locke, quite innocently.

"'Why, the Frozen Sea, to be sure,' said the other.

"'I must still ask to which Polar or Frozen Sea you refer, sir, before I can answer your question,' said the former; 'the Northern or Southern?'

"'Well, that beats me,' observed the erudite dealer; 'I had supposed the Frozen Ocean was, of course, in the north; for we all know

that the farther we go north, the colder it is; and the farther we go south, the warmer it is. Don't you think so, Mr. Blake?

" 'Why, I had thought so, certainly,' responded Blake, glancing at Amsden, with a supercilious smile, — 'not that I have any wish to expose any body's ignorance, by any means; but being appealed to in the matter, so, it's but civil to answer the question. And, now I am speaking on the subject of geographical literature, I may as well, gentlemen,' he continued, — deeming it now a favorable time to press the advantage he supposed he had gained over his rival, by an extra display of his erudition, — 'I may as well tell you at once, that I rather pride myself on my knowledge of terrestrial geography, and my improved modes of teaching it. I teach it almost entirely by maps, and the map-making process. And it would astonish you to see how quick scholars, in this way, will become accomplished geographers. I learn 'em, in a very short time, also, to make the most splendid maps, equal, nearly, to the printed ones, of all sorts and sizes, both on Mercator's project, as they call it, and on the principle of circular latitudes. Nor is this but a small part of the embellishments I teach my scholars, when they have the proper instruments to work with. There's the problems and the circles, the squares, triangular geometry, ovals, perspective configurations, and a thousand curious things, I could teach, if I only had the instruments; such as Gunter's dividers, circumflutors, and the like. And then I would teach musical Psalmody, of evenings, for nothing, which, as I see you are about building a new church here, might be an object. In short, gentlemen, I should be very happy to add my best powers in accomplishing your children, and helping to build up your flourishing village. But I leave the decision to you, gentlemen, with the greatest pleasure; because I have discovered you to be men of the most ecstatic discernment.'

" As soon as the speaker had fairly delivered himself of this learned harangue, Amsden, — who knew not which most to admire, the effrontery and ignorance of the fellow, or the ignorance and blindness of the committee, who seemed so readily to swallow all he said, — inquired if there was not some man of science in the place, who could be called in to conduct the examination, and assist the committee in deciding upon the merits of the applicants now before them. This inquiry, as reasonable and fair as was its obvious object, produced, as a close observer might have easily seen, considerable sensation in the before well-assured mind of Locke's exulting competitor; and his uneasiness was the next moment increased into downright apprehension, by a remark of the tailor, who, in a rather hesitating manner, said, —

" 'Why, there's the minister that preaches half the time here, — and he's now in the place, I guess. He's a college-learnt man, they say, and would be willing to come in, perhaps, if' —

" 'Why, if these gentlemen,' interrupted Blake, rising in visible agitation, 'if these gentlemen don't consider themselves capable of deciding on our qualifications and embellishments, then, I say, I am willing, — perfectly willing, I say, to' —

" 'Well, I am not,' interposed the luminous head of the *Blazing Star*, with much decision. 'I shall most pointedly object to that measure. I should consider it as no less than involving an approach to a sanction of that never-to-be-enough-reprobated doctrine of the union of church and state. And I should raise my voice' —

" 'Ah, I think we can get along,' said the merchant, breaking in

on the latter, and now rising and looking at his watch with an impatient and irritated air, — ‘I think we can get along without the help of the minister in this business. And if the two gentlemen,’ he continued, with rather a discriminating gesture, ‘will step into the other room, or over to the tavern, we can probably come to a decision of the case without much trouble, I think.’

“The two candidates accordingly retired, — Blake into the adjoining room, and Amsden, as was doubtless intended, to the tavern, — to give to the astute trio of examiners an opportunity for private deliberation.

“‘Shall we mark, gentlemen?’ said the merchant, cutting three separate slips of paper, and passing two of them to his colleagues, with a pencil, that each might write the name of the candidate he would select, and present it for comparison with those of the others, after the manner of appraising a horse.

“‘Well, if I was fully satisfied about Mr. Blake’s grammar,’ said the tailor, doubtingly, holding his pencil over his paper.

“‘I am satisfied about it well enough for my case,’ observed the merchant, dashing down the chosen name, with a decisive sweep of the hand.

“‘And so am I,’ responded the editor; ‘and what is more, he is sound in political principles, to the core.’

“‘O, I an’t strenuous, gentlemen,’ said the tailor, following the example of the others in filling his blank.

“The three slips, with the written sides downward, were then held up together, and turned over, bringing the name on each to view. And it was *Blake — Blake — Blake!*”

---

WELSH TRIADS. — Three things that never become rusty, — the money of the benevolent, the shoes of the butcher’s horse, and a woman’s tongue. Three things not easily done, — to allay thirst with fire, to dry wet with water, to please all in every thing that is done. Three things that are as good as the best, — brown bread in famine, well water in thirst, and a gray coat in cold. Three things as good as their better, — dirty water to extinguish the fire, an ugly wife to a blind man, and a wooden sword to a coward. Three things that seldom agree, — two cats over one mouse, two wives in the same house, and two lovers after the same maiden. Three warnings from the grave, — thou knowest what I was, thou seest what I am, remember what thou art to be. Three things of short continuance, — a lady’s love, a chip fire, and a brook’s flood. Three things that ought never to be from home, — the cat, the chimney, and *the housewife*. Three essentials to a false storyteller, — a good memory, a bold face, and fools for his audience. Three things seen in the peacock, — the garb of an angel, the walk of a thief, and the voice of the devil. Three things it is unwise to boast of, — the flavor of thy ale, the beauty of thy wife, and the contents of thy purse. Three miseries of a man’s house, — a smoky chimney, a dripping roof, and a scolding wife. — *Toronto Examiner*.

## A FATHER'S ADVICE TO HIS SON.

THERE are counsels replete with wisdom for the young in the following letter, written by Sir Henry Sidney to his son Philip, then twelve years of age, while absent from the paternal roof, at school in Shrewsbury.

"I have received two letters from you, which I take in good part; and since this is my first letter that ever I did write to you, I will not that it be empty of some advices, which my natural care of you provoketh me to wish you to follow, as documents to you in this your tender age.

"Let first your action be the lifting up of your mind to Almighty God by hearty prayer; and feelingly digest the words you speak in prayer, with continual meditation, and thinking of Him to whom you pray, and of the matter for which you pray; and use this at an ordinary hour, whereby the time itself will put you in remembrance to that which you are accustomed to do in that time.

"Apply your study to such hours as your discreet master doth assign you, earnestly; and the time, I know, he will so limit as shall be both sufficient for your learning, and safe for your health.

"And mark the sense and the matter of what you read, as well as the words; so shall you both enrich your tongue with words and your wit with matter; and judgment will grow as years groweth in you.

"Be humble and obedient to your master; for unless you frame yourself to obey others, yea, and feel in yourself what obedience is, you shall never be able to teach others how to obey you.

"Be cautious of gesture; be affable to all men, with diversity of reverence, according to the dignity of the person. There is nothing that winneth so much with so little cost.

"Use moderate diet, so as, after your meat, you may find your wit fresher, and not duller, and your body more lively, and not more heavy.

"Use exercise of body, but such as is without peril of your joints or bones; it will increase your force and enlarge your breath.

"Delight to be cleanly, as well in all parts of your body as in your garments; it shall make you grateful in each company, and, otherwise, loathsome.

"Give yourself to be merry; for you degenerated from your father, if you find not yourself most able in wit and body to do any thing when you be most merry. But let your mirth be ever void of all scurrility and biting words to any man; for a wound given by a word is oftentimes harder to be cured than that which is given by the sword.



"Be you rather a hearer and bearer away of other men's talk, than a beginner or procurer of speech; otherwise you shall be counted to delight to hear yourself speak.

"If you hear a wise sentence, or an apt phrase, commit it to your memory, with respect to the circumstances when you shall speak it.

"Let never oath be heard to come out of your mouth, nor word of ribaldry; detest it in others, so shall custom make to yourself a law against it in yourself.

"Be modest in each assembly; and rather be rebuked of light fellows for maidenlike shamefacedness, than of your sad friends for pert boldness.

"Think upon every word that you will speak before you utter it, and remember how nature hath rampired up, as it were, the tongue with teeth, lips, yea, and hair without the lips, and all betokening reins or bridles for the loose use of that member.

"Above all things, tell no untruth; no, not in trifles. The custom of it is naught; and let it not satisfy you, that, for a time, the hearers take it for a truth; for, after, it will be known as it is, to your shame; for there cannot be a greater reproach to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar.

"Study and endeavor yourself to be virtuously occupied; so shall you make such a habit of well-doing in you, that you shall not know how to do evil though you would.

"Remember, my son, the noble blood you are descended of by your mother's side, and think that only by virtuous life and good action, you may be an ornament to that illustrious family, and otherwise, through vice and sloth, you shall be counted *labes generis*, one of the greatest curses that can happen to men.

"Well, my little Philip, this is enough for me, and too much, I fear, for you. But, if I shall find that this light meal of digestion nourish any thing the weak stomach of your young capacity, I will, as I find the same grow stronger, feed it with thorough food.

"Your loving father, as long as you live in the fear of God.

"H. SIDNEY."

The *little Philip* of this beautiful letter was the SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

---

A PROBLEM TO BE EXAMINED BY THE CLASSES IN DISCOUNT. — Old Skinflint was the most celebrated broker in Philadelphia; his "shaving" operations were famous, as he generally took off not only beard and whiskers, but "a pound of flesh" in addition. Young Harry Scarum was one of those dashing chaps who love wine and horses, and who form the majority of the great army of borrowers. Harry, having wants, on various occasions, borrowed of Skinflint, at three per cent. a month "off," — and having, at sundry periods, made "raises," paid off

his responsibilities. At last he got tired of such constant borrowing and repaying. It would be six years before his estates could be sold, under the terms of his father's will, who had prudently postponed that event until Harry would reach the age of "thirty;" and Harry concluded it would be better to make a heavy operation at once, and be rid of the bother of continual borrowings. Away to Skinflint he hied, determined to procure a good round sum, and be done with it.

"I want ten thousand for six years."

"Hem! What security will you give?"

"O, you may have my bond; that will bind my property."

"Hem! What discount will you give? You know my rule is, always to take the discount 'off;'—besides, you owe me a thousand due to-day, and I lent you a 'ten' in the street the other day."

"I won't pay what I've been paying;—one and a quarter per cent. a month is enough. You may take it 'off,' and take out what I owe you besides."

"Hem! Well, here's a bond for \$10,000 at six years. Sign it, and it'll be all right."

No sooner said than done. Harry affixed his autograph, and hummed a tune, whilst Skinflint got out his check-book, and made a calculation.

"Have you got ten dollars about you?" said he, in a moment; "if so, let me have it."

"All right, my old boy," said Harry, supposing he wanted it to 'make change,'—here it is."

"Hem! hem!" said Skinflint, locking up his desk, and making preparations to "shoot."

"Stop, old fellow," said Harry; "where's my money?"

"Your money! O, why, you've got it."

"Got it? What do you mean?"

"Why, I was to take off the discount, wasn't I, and the thousand?"

"Yes, but I want my money."

"Why, my dear fellow, you've got it. Ten thousand at one and a quarter a month, for six years, is *nine thousand*;—a *thousand* you owed me; and you've just paid the *ten*; it's all right, my dear boy;—a *fair business transaction*!"

---

In the New York House of Refuge, a bright lad, ten or twelve years old, was asked,—

"Did you ever attend school?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"*Father kept me at home to steal.*"

The managers of the House above referred to, say in their last report, "Of nearly four thousand children received, educat-

ed, taught habits of industry and morality, and sent away from their early associations of vice and crime, more than three fourths have been reformed."

---

**NOT BAD FOR 1847.** — In 1697, Miss Anne Baynard, an English lady of great reputation for literature and piety, being then on her death-bed, uttered the following exhortations: "I desire that all young people may be exhorted to the practice of virtue, and to increase their knowledge by the study of philosophy, and more especially to read the great book of nature, wherein they may see the wisdom and power of the great Creator in the order of the universe and in the production and preservation of all things. It will fix in their minds a love to so much perfection, frame a divine idea and an awful regard for God, which will heighten devotion, and lower the spirit of pride, and give a habit and disposition to his service; it will make us tremble at folly and profaneness, and command reverence and prostration to his great and holy name. That women are capable of such improvements, which will better their judgments and understandings, is past all doubt, would they but set to it in earnest, and spend but half of that time in study and thinking which they do in visits, vanity, and folly. 'Twould introduce a composure of mind, and lay a sound basis and groundwork for wisdom and knowledge, by which they would be better enabled to serve God and help their neighbors."

---

#### OUR FLIGHT WITH RUSSELL.

Up, up, my Lord John Russell, — 'tis a fair night for a fly, —  
 Be thou a new Cleophas, — a new Asmodeus I!  
 Come, clutch thy cloak, — and through the smoke together let us mark  
 The life of London, huddled 'neath the blanket of the dark.

The moonlight falls on fair St. Paul's, on the Abbey grim and gray;  
 Lo! the lamps, like fiery serpents, go winding far away;  
 Or, like glowworms, scattered, twinkle and wink up from below;  
 But 'tis not to gaze on this fair sight that through the night we go.

Not a builded brick, or stone, or stick, on those wide acres thrown,  
 But bears a tongue within it, — hath a language of its own;  
 In street, and square, and alley bare, — with its growth of human seed,  
 Is a great book spread beneath us, — Look down, my lord, and read!

In steeples upward springing, read prayer struck into stone;  
 In prisons barred and bastioned, read crime, and curse, and groan;  
 In lighted West End houses, read mirth, and warmth, and show;  
 In foul St. Giles's hovels, read squalor, want, and woe.

There's a homily, — hark to it. 'Tis the voice of Saffron Hill:  
 "I suffer, how I suffer from my freight of human ill;  
 All is filthiness without me; all is ignorance within;  
 I ache with cramps, — I shake with damps, — O the warmth of glorious gin!"

And now for proof, — off goes a roof, — is that a house or hive?  
 Each bed 's a room, each room a town, so packed and yet alive!

Lo, the maggot life of London! And that hopeless, hapless horde,  
In foulness bred, in foulness fed, is work for you, my lord!

Another, and another, and the sight is still the same, —  
Suffering that knows no solace, and sin that knows no shame;  
Hunger by thousand tables; savage life 'mid thousand schools; —  
Here are human hearts to frame anew, — bethink you of the tools.

But hark! another voice is up, and pompously it booms  
From well-spread tables, easy beds, and trimly-furnished rooms:  
"I am Respectability; things must not go on so;  
There's nowhere I can drive my gig, but something calls out, "Woe."

"Then your sanitary meddlers, all agog for drain and sewer, —  
For my part, all I know is, I wish the drains were fewer;  
Poor folks will throw things down 'em; — as for unwholesome air,  
I know our street's extremely sweet, and that's all my affair."

Whereon chimes in big Bumbledom, "You're right, my worthy friend;  
'Tis time this stuff and nonsense were brought unto an end; —  
There's the Union Workhouse for the poor, — you should see how we have  
broke 'em  
Into temperance by short diet, into industry by oakum."

But hark! that hoarse and hollow voice, — 'tis from a Newgate cell: —  
"Be silent, heartless blind-worms! — a different tale I tell;  
I've wrestled crime for centuries, and feeble all I feel,  
Though my bones are bones of granite, and my sinews hammered steel.

"Ye little wot how hard and hot the tide of crime flows ever;  
How it laughs my Canute-talk to scorn, and mocks my stern endeavor;  
How law aghast aside is cast before that fearful sea  
Which makes a plaything of the scourge, and a toy of the gallows-tree.

"Call Mother Church to help me; let Saint School do all she can;  
Give them child crime to fight with, and leave me the full-grown man,  
Or soon the evil saps my walls, and downforth will ye fall,  
Master Bumble, Sir Respectable, gig, mace, cocked-hat, and all!"

The stern sounds cease, the stars look peace on the streets so still and gray, —  
And now to Downing Street, my lord, with what appetite you may;  
And bethink you of the lesson of London read aright,  
When, with "Punch" for guide, you listened to the voices of the night.  
*London Punch.*

#### SCHOOL BOOKS.

A GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE; adapted to the  
Schools of America. By JOSEPH R. CHANDLER, Editor of  
the United States Gazette. Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowper-  
thwait, & Co. 1847.

AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE,  
with a Concise System of English Grammar, illustrated by  
Remarks and Explanatory Notes, peculiarly adapted to Youth  
and Foreigners. By N. VERNON, Professor of Mathematics,  
Frederick College, Maryland. *Natura libro meo, Deo Pre-  
ceptore.* Frederick City, Md.: Schley & Haller. 1847.

✉ *All Communications, Newspapers, and Periodicals, for  
the Editor, to be addressed to West Newton, Mass.*

[THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL is published semi-monthly, by WILLIAM B.  
FOWLE, No. 138½ Washington Street, up stairs, (opposite School Street,) Boston.  
HORACE MANN, Editor. Price, One Dollar a year, payable in advance.]